

Dr. ✓  
**DR. PAINE'S ANSWER**

TO

**CIRCULAR LETTERS**

BY

**DRS. CARPENTER AND FORBES.**

From the "Boston Medical and Surgical Journal."

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## ANSWER TO CIRCULAR LETTERS.

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*To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.*

SIR,—Will you oblige me with a place in your Journal, for the purpose of noticing a circular letter, addressed by Wm. B. Carpenter, M.D., to Professor Dunglison of Philadelphia, dated Bristol (Eng.), Nov. 16, 1841.

That circular refers to an imputation of plagiarisms, which I considered myself warranted in bringing against Dr. Carpenter, in a pamphlet entitled "Examination of Reviews," &c. Having exposed the remarkable tissue of misrepresentations which composes the review of my "Medical and Physiological Commentaries" (as appeared in the April No. (1841), of the British and Foreign Medical Review), and having, for very obvious reasons, drawn the offender from his obscurity, I then proceeded to inflict upon him, yet farther, what I regarded as a proper chastisement for the cowardly and wanton injury which he had attempted to perpetrate towards myself, and upon Dr. Forbes for admitting so *malicious* an article into his Journal, by exposing the plagiarism to which Dr. Carpenter's letter refers. The plagiarism was fully substantiated as it respects the Journal; and circumstantial evidence was submitted, going forcibly to show the probability that Dr. Carpenter was the author. That evidence was conclusive in my own mind, till it should be rebutted by contradictory proof; and, of course, I had no doubt whatever that the public would sustain my conclusion on examining the nature of my premises. The repeated plagiarisms occur in the elaborate reviews of John Hunter's works, and of works by Carswell, Macartney and Rasori, contained in the April and July Nos. of the British and Foreign Medical Review, 1839, and occupying sixty-one (61) pages of the Journal. These authors, too, being pretty much used up by the reviewer, I considered it but an act of justice to the brightest ornaments of our profession to remove this slur upon their fame.

It is the object of the circular letter addressed to Professor Dunglison, to disclaim the authorship of those reviews, and this statement is accompanied by a letter from Dr. Forbes to Dr. Carpenter, in which Dr. Forbes remarks that,—“I shall take no notice whatever of his [Dr. Paine's] attack, farther than relates to the charge of plagiarism. *This is true*, so far as the writer of the review on Hunter is concerned, but *false* as concerns *you*—since you did not write that review. This I am



ready to state to all persons, at all times, as the truth, without any reservation or equivocation."

I have also received a curious letter from Dr. Carpenter, stating that he is not the author of the reviews of Hunter's, Carswell's, Macartney's, and Rasori's works, accompanied by copies of certificates from two gentlemen to Dr. Carpenter, expressing their belief that he is incapable of an act of plagiarism. The letter also contains a reference to an article in the *Lancet* of Nov. 27th, from which it appears that it is the tendency of that article to exonerate Dr. Carpenter from the imputed plagiarisms,—but which I have not seen. With the package came, also, the *certificates of character* supplied to Dr. Carpenter on the occasion of the review of his "Principles," &c., by the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*.

This is all the proof with which I have been supplied in opposition to the various and forcible internal evidence of the imputed plagiarisms. This evidence I know to have been generally considered ample in this country, as it appears to have been also in London. Indeed, this fact is prominent upon the very face of the circular letter. Such proof, therefore, can only be set aside by producing some other name as that of the author in question. If my proof be insufficient, it would seem to be obvious that the name of the plagiarist should be given to the world. This is alike due to Dr. Carpenter, to men of letters, and certainly to the dignity of Dr. Forbes himself. Indeed, till then, such as are disposed to exonerate Dr. Carpenter, *must hold Dr. Forbes responsible*. *Indignation* at so great a fraud upon himself should prompt a *disinterested* editor to expose the offender. Why does not Dr. Carpenter call for a disclosure of the author? This is certainly a most natural, as it would be a summary, mode of disposing of the whole subject. But again, I say, *where* is the *editor's self-respect*, that he does not expose the individual who perpetrated the indignity towards him? "The conduct of the writer of that review," says Dr. Forbes, "in *palming* upon the *Editor* a portion of the writings of another for his own, *cannot be sufficiently reprobated*." Then, I reiterate, give us his name, and "let justice prevail, though the heavens fall." Present us another name; and then we shall have another phenomenon added to those extraordinary combinations of coincidences which Cotton Mather arranged under the denomination of "Unaccountables."

And yet mark the sophistry,—the effort to disguise, or palliate, the most flagrant plagiarisms to be found on record;—"if really done intentionally," says Dr. Forbes, "and with a view to deceive,—I would fain hope that the fact may admit of some other interpretation," &c. ! And now let the intelligent reader consider the motives for this undisguised attempt to entrap him into the conclusion that this most degrading plagiarism may have been accidental ! Let the reader then, also, interrogate himself as to the degree of credibility which should be ascribed to the man who can make such a compromise with the plainest facts, and with his own understanding of them.

And, why speak I of *self-respect* in relation to a man who professes the "truth *without* equivocation," and yet contradicts the principle in

nearly every line of his letter? Does not the whole of his letter—I repeat it—bear an aspect from which truth recoils, as much as common decorum is startled at its low-born insolence? Take any passage in the solitary letter-page, and every unprejudiced mind will allow the justice of my criticism. What can be more wilfully false than the whole of the following? Thus:—

“In looking at the vast accumulation of words in Dr. Paine’s pamphlet, I confess that I feel regret that the review of his book (just and accurate as I still hold it to be) was not more favorable; as it is melancholy to think that so much time and pains should have been stolen from tasks of usefulness, and expended in elaborating a work, which, of course, no human being will read, except the author himself, perhaps the writer of the inculcated article, and, alas, the Editor of the Review.”

Here it is an obvious falsehood in affirming that he holds the review of my “Commentaries” to be “*just and accurate*,” notwithstanding I have shown that the review is, throughout, a tissue of deliberate misrepresentations. Again, the opinion is not less falsely expressed, that “no human being will, of course, read the work except the author himself, perhaps the writer of the inculcated article, and, alas, the Editor of the Review.” And what shall be said of Dr. Carpenter for appending this abusive letter to his circular, after the unatoned offence of misrepresenting my labors, and my character?

Again, Dr. Forbes states that my imputation of articles in his Journal to Dr. Carpenter is founded upon the editorial pronoun “*we*”; whereas, the *most important are directly claimed by Dr. Carpenter, in his own works, as his productions*; and where he refers to others in his review of my “Commentaries,” I have shown that it is not in the ordinary way of editorial reference, but that he sets up a *claim* to the articles in question, of which the review of Hunter’s works is one. Or take the following prevarication, by which Dr. Forbes would insinuate that Dr. Carpenter is not the author of the review of my “Commentaries,” instead of a manly disavowal. “Perhaps,” says Dr. Forbes, “when Dr. Paine discovers that he is mistaken in the affiliation of this portion of the Review, he may feel somewhat less confident of the evidence by which he thinks he has traced the authorship of other articles in it to you. I certainly shall not GRATIFY HIS CURIOSITY on this point, by either affirming or DENYING the accuracy of his conclusions; and I DO NOT SEE ANY REASON WHY YOU SHOULD.” (*My capitals.*)

And why this wily advice not to admit or deny the authorship of the review of the “Commentaries”? Was it supposed that either might possibly invalidate the statement as to the plagiarism? Nevertheless, the cunning of this advice is worthy its well-disciplined author, however it is a palpable admission of the very fact which he aims at concealing. But, I will soon add the paragraph upon which I had just commented, in connection with another from Dr. Carpenter’s letter, to exhibit more fully this lame attempt to insinuate the belief that Dr. Carpenter was not the author of the gross injustice which had been done to my labors, and of which Dr. Forbes still appears insensible.

That the author of the plagiarisms, whoever he be, should broadly de-



ny it, seems almost a matter of course. It would be absurd to suppose him restrained by principle; and it is equally important that Dr. Forbes, even with his sensitive conscience, should make it appear that Dr. Carpenter is not the author of the reviews which embrace the plagiarisms; since Dr. Carpenter having avowed himself, in the Preface to his "Principles of Physiology," the author of elaborate articles in the British and Foreign Medical Review, the proof of the plagiarism standing uncontradicted would be fatal to the *existence of that Journal*. But mark; as it respects the articles in question, Dr. Forbes affirms that these extensive reviews of four most eminent cultivators of medical science were "the first specimen he had had of this person's writing, and, with one trifling exception, the only one he had ever had"! *Credat Judæus!*

It will be recollected that the plagiarisms consist of thefts from the Rev. Dr. Channing's works, and that the imputation reaches to Dr. Carpenter's "Principles of General and Comparative Physiology." I refer to this, for the purpose of introducing the following coincidence from Dr. Carpenter's circular letter. "The ideas which I have expressed," he says, "have been so long familiar to my mind, that I cannot imagine that they involve anything peculiarly Channing-ian. If any correspondence do exist [!] it is easily accounted for by the fact, that I received my education from one, who was for many years the respected and attached friend of that illustrious man, and *WHOSE mind*, cast in the *same* mould with *HIS*, *impressed MINE* with those *habits* of thought, which had led to whatever *SIMILARITY* may present itself between our published opinions"!—(*My capitals and Italics.*)

Now, then, this remarkable fact never would have been laid before the world, but for two obvious reasons; namely, 1st, because the parallel readings which occur in my "Examination" are *convincing*; and, therefore, we have here, under Dr. Carpenter's own signature, in his very letter of denial, a full admission that I had ample ground for the imputation of plagiarism, even had I not been prompted by the wanton attempt of this individual to falsify the hard labors of my professional life. 2nd, the foregoing remarkable fact is stated, also, because it is more or less known that Dr. Carpenter was educated by one who was "for many years the respected and attached friend of *that* illustrious man,"—but a fact which was wholly unknown to me till I saw it stated in Dr. Carpenter's circular!!

Again, when such fluttering occurs among the most callous critics of this or any other age, can there be a more substantial proof that my imputation of plagiarism is powerfully sustained? Do *such* critics tremble but under a well-merited lash, and this, too, when applied by one whom they affect to hold in that indifference which is the never-failing resource of defeat? Does not the whole world believe that my proof is clear, and does not the trepidation of the redoubtable critics evince their consciousness of the fact? And why does the world believe? Surely upon my *proof*, not my *dictum*. Dr. Carpenter says to me, "your charges [not *charges*] have been very generally believed among those who do not know me." And who are they that thus surrender their belief to an unknown foreigner against one of their own cherished and much-honored countrymen? Who are they that thus forego an indomitable and ever-



glorious national pride, to do a mortifying homage at the shrine of truth? They are illustrious Englishmen—the most illustrious men of the age—such as *believe* only upon *proof* when character is impugned. Nor—I repeat it—was a humble republican of America at all likely to gain indulgence but upon the abstract merits of his cause. Let it then be known, that I distributed eight hundred copies of my “Examination” amongst the scavans of Europe, and in every instance, but one or two, their names are publicly enrolled as employed in the cause of science. To those same gentlemen I shall transmit these remarks.

And yet it is possible that I may be in error, and, what is very unusual, upon such a question, the intellectual world may be in error also. Let us then inquire, which is the greater offence—an act of plagiarism by a critic, or a systematic tissue of misrepresentations, by the same critic, of one of the most laborious works that has ever come from the medical press? To prove this falsification was the *main* object of my “Examination.” Why, then, so much solicitude about the plagiarisms, and none at all about the *falsehoods*? Dr. Carpenter complains, in his letter to me, of the injury which will result to him from my imputation; and had there been one word of regret in that letter at the furious assault which had been made upon my labors, and even my character, it would have paralyzed my arm forever. But, he seems utterly insensible to the injury which would have resulted to myself from his libellous attack, had I not published that “Examination” under which he is now doing a bitter penance. There is, however, no parallel in our cases. I was marked as an innocent victim by the unprincipled editor; and his ever-ready scribe rejoiced in the opportunity. The dispensations of justice were against them. The guilty have fallen; and now they come before the world with a selfishness which is truly characteristic of the trade they follow.

I trust that the public will not be led away by the wailings of wounded pride from the main object of my “Examination of REVIEWS,” which was to expose the scandalous system of reviewing by a part of the London medical press, which is mostly conducted by young aspirants who endeavor to sacrifice all but their own *cliques*, or, at most, lavish their praises upon the works of others which they know to have fallen “dead-born from the press.” If our *par nobile fratrum* have been caught at last, shall they be permitted to effect their escape *under a cry* that is foreign to the great object of my “Examination”? I certainly feel but *very little interest* in the affair of the *plagiarisms*, beyond the fullest disposition to be just to others, and to sustain the truth. And, while adverting to the leading medical presses of London, as well, also, to show with what consideration the imputed plagiarisms were received in Europe, I will take the liberty of quoting a paragraph from a letter which I have just received from as distinguished a philosopher as adorns the present age—premising, also, that I have not the honor of knowing him personally, or of ever having before received a communication from him. Thus:—

“DEAR SIR,—I beg to thank you for the copy of your ‘Examination’ which you were so kind as to send me, and which I had the pleasure of receiving a few days ago. The exposure of Dr. Carpenter’s



*plagiarism will do good. The whole system of anonymous medical reviewing in this country is disgraceful, conducted as it is almost entirely by the hands of a set of pert boys, at most but just emerged from their medical studies."*

Finally ; it is unnecessary to say that there is no other attempt to escape from the proof by which I so variously identified Dr. Carpenter as the author of the review of my "Commentaries," than the following prevaricating passage with which Dr. Carpenter's circular letter commences, and which, of course, is equivalent to an admission of the authorship, however he may be disposed to screen himself behind his accommodating friend. Thus:—

"Having just received from Dr. Paine a copy of his 'Examination' of the Critique on his Medical and Physiological Commentaries, which appeared in the April number of the British and Foreign Medical Review, I find, to my great surprise, that Dr. P. has thought himself justified—not only in singling *me* out as the Author of it, and in animadverting upon what he considers to be *its* misrepresentations, as if they were *mine*, thereby attempting to make that a matter of personal discussion between us, for which the editor of the Review holds himself responsible," &c.

This is all the atonement I receive for the wrong attempted by Dr. Carpenter ; whilst he holds himself up as an injured man because he was unfortunate at the game he had undertaken. As to his "surprise at being singled out as the Author," he should have considered more maturely the spirit of the following passage which occurs in my "Examination." Thus:—"That great and dignified critic, Samuel Johnson, advises authors—"to consider how they whom publication lays open to the *insults* of such as their *obscurity* secures against reprisals, may extricate themselves from unexpected encounters.' It is obvious that one of the important expedients, in cases of this nature, lies in raising the veil, and surprising the offender." That I was correct in *this* opinion, I presume that even Dr. Carpenter will most readily allow.

But, take a passage to which I have already referred for another purpose, from Dr. Forbes's letter, in which, with a view to protecting Dr. Carpenter against the charge of being the author of the review of Hunter's, Macartney's, Carswell's and Rasori's, works, he unwittingly avows that Dr. Carpenter is the author of the Review of Paine's Commentaries. Indeed, he even founds an argument upon the avowal. The authorship being admitted, Dr. Forbes then proceeds to show that Dr. Carpenter must not be held responsible for other articles because he employed the editorial *we* in his reference to others, in his review of Paine's Commentaries.

"It is singular that Dr. Paine should have been so ignorant of the ordinary mode of conducting a Review, as not to know that the reference from one article to another is no proof whatever of the identity of the authorship of the two—even when this reference is made by the writer of the latter article. But, most commonly, such references are made by the Editor, without any communication with the original writer, in the exercise of the privileges inherent in the office of the great editorial WE."

The foregoing is the shuffling to which I have before referred as misre-

presenting the means by which I have connected Dr. Carpenter with various articles in the British and Foreign Medical Review. The impotent attempt which is made in the circular letters to imply that Dr. Carpenter is not the author of the review of my "Commentaries," in opposition to the various and overwhelming proof contained in my "Examination," and the simultaneous betrayal of this attempt at deception, as well as the other exposures which I have now made, divest the letters of all claim to credibility, even were not the parties arraigned for an offence which demands other proof of innocence than the mere negative of the inculpated. But, I also repeat it, these two letters not only establish the guilt of Dr. Carpenter as it respects his misrepresentation of my labors, and of my character, but go far to fix upon him the *stain of plagiarism*. In his future attempt to wipe away this stain, it will be well to express some contrition at the magnitude of the offence which was perpetrated in relation to myself.

I have always been sensible that I had but little to hope, at present, from the medical press of Europe; nor have I been mistaken in the estimate I had formed of a portion of the press in that part of the world. I have never apprehended, however, that full justice would not ultimately come, when this "*age of pamphlets*" shall have passed, and therefore I have looked with comparative indifference upon the treatment which I have received, though with a stern determination to protect myself against every act of injustice from sources entitled to consideration. That tears of editorial sympathy will now deluge the European hemisphere, cannot be doubted; but, whether the flood will be increased from this side of the Atlantic, time can only disclose. In the meanwhile, I shall prepare myself for the coming of the waters, and be ready with my Ark for a "nine days' storm." I am, Mr. Editor, most respectfully yours,

New York, 446 Broome street.

MARTYN PAINE.

December 24, 1841.

P. S.—I shall esteem it a favor, as well as an act of justice, if those journals which may publish Dr. Carpenter's circular letter to Professor Dunglison, or other communications from Dr. Forbes relative to the imputed plagiarisms, will give the foregoing comments an insertion.

M. PAINE.